



## PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

DATE: July 1, 2002

TO: NICK P. YOVINO, Director  
Planning and Development Department

THROUGH: RAYBURN R. BEACH, Planning Manager  
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SUBJECT: SETBACKS AND ENERGY

The City should consider that Section 12-306-E-5 of the Fresno Municipal Code, referring to reduction of required yards for energy conservation purposes, be utilized (interpreted) to all covered porches to encroach five feet into the front yard setback.

According to 12-306-E-5, the director may allow for the reduction of a required setback in single-family residential structures if found that such reductions are not detrimental to the public welfare, injurious to property and improvements in the area, and will not be contrary to the objectives of the Zoning Ordinance. Further, Subsection 12-306-E-5(a) states that "*the reduction shall be for the purpose of ....reducing the use of nonrenewable energy resources,*" which covered porches have been proven to accomplish.

According to City Architect Matthew Lopez, the use of covered porches has been shown to significantly reduce the amount of energy absorbed by the habitable spaces of a structure. The significance is illustrated in energy analysis calculations done on new construction. These calculations use a *solar heat gain coefficient* (SHGC) that is greatly affected by shading. A decrease in the SHGC reduces the BTU's (heat) absorbed by a wall, thereby trimming energy requirements as they relate to HVAC (air conditioning). This is further explained by referring to the *California Energy Commission Residential Efficiency Standards*, which state that a reduction in SHGC is an effective means of reducing energy usage.

Such an interpretation, broadly used, can provide several positive outcomes:

1. Actual reduction in energy usage that results from greater shading of interior spaces;
2. Perception that this community values such measures and actually applies them;
3. Flexibility in development standards, thereby fostering innovative design solutions;
4. Increased social interaction and safety benefits that result from more "eyes on the street" where front porches are prominent.

A statement of this interpretation could be made available to staff, allowing us to provide equal treatment of applications as well as inform and promote this advancement to the public and development community.

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Attachment: Fresno Municipal Code Section 12-306-E

nor more than six feet in height erected on the property line abutting the area used for off-street parking. For regulations see Section 12-306-H. The required front yard shall be landscaped with appropriate materials and shall be maintained.

3. Official Plan Lines shall be established by the Major Street and Highway Plan.
4. Rear Yards

Rear yards on single lots and in Unit Planned Developments may be less than the required setback, provided that a site plan is submitted in accordance with the provisions of Section 12-406, that in no case shall the rear yard be less than the required side yard for the district, and the Director shall first find that the granting of the reduction will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property and improvements in the area in which the property is located and will not be contrary to the objectives of this Zoning Ordinance. Space equal to the reduction shall be provided elsewhere on the lot, exclusive of required yard area. Said replacement space shall have minimum dimensions of eight feet by eight feet, and shall be so located that it is suitable for general use by the occupant of the premises.

5. Reduction for Energy Conservation Purposes

Front, side and rear yards may be less than the required setback in single-family residential subdivisions in order to enhance building orientation for energy conservation purposes, provided that the Director shall find that the granting of the reduction will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property and improvements in the area in which the property is located, and will not be contrary to the objectives of the Zoning Ordinance, and that the reduction meets the following conditions:

- a. The reduction shall be for the purpose of achieving or improving solar access or otherwise reducing the use of nonrenewable energy resources.
- b. The reduction shall be limited to new single-family residential construction.
- c. The reduction shall not reduce the required building setback to less than three feet in a side yard, fifteen (15) feet in a front yard, or five feet in a rear yard.
- d. In order to maintain sufficient access to rear yards for fire protection purposes, one side yard shall maintain a minimum setback of five feet.
- e. The reduction shall conform to garage and carport distance requirements of Section 12-207.5-E-1.
- f. The reduction shall conform to lot coverage requirements of the zone district.
- g. The reduction shall conform to the corner cutoff provisions of Section 11-224.

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